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STATE OF THE UNION.

SPEECH

OF

HON. SHERRARD CLEMENS, OF VIRGINIA,

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, JANUARY 22, 1861.

The House having under consideration the report from the select committee of thirty-three—

Mr. CLEMENS said:

Mr. SPEAKER: For two years and more, my voice has rarely resounded in this Hall. On questions of high debate my vote has even been wanting. Contending with physical anguish, on a bed of languishment and disease, the dependent mind could be but wearily exercised. I know, sir, I have done nothing worthy of the high place to which I have been so generously called. I know I have not justified the expectations of the noble constituency whose sympathy has soothed, and whose support has smoothed, the thorny path which sickness always brings. Sacred silence is, perhaps, the proper meed for these sacred matters; but I would feign believe, that, by a benign ordination of God, at the very period when my services are needed by my people most, I have, in the precious boon of renovated health, the power to represent them. I would speak in *their* cause, this day, living, as they do, upon the very confines of what may be hostile confederacies. I would speak as one who has never known anything from them but the beneficence with which they have sustained me, and the good offices by which they have overflowed my heart with gratitude. Sir, I would not speak in passion. It befits not the solemn and portentous issues of this hour. We are in the midst of great events. We are making history. We may be in the dying days of this Republic; and I should undo my deeds, I should unknow my knowledge, before I would, as the traveler in the Alps, utter, even in a whisper, one word which might bring down the avalanche upon the quiet homes of my people. I would speak as a southern man, identified by birth, by education, by residence, by interest, by property, by affection, with her population. Sir, on a bayou of the Mississippi, reposes now in quiet the inheritance of my children—an inheritance which, even in slaves, amounts to one half of the whole number in all the eleven counties which compose my congressional district in Virginia. I would speak as a western Virginian, and as the custodian of the

property of those children, who are not old enough to know the peril to which it is exposed by those who are riding on the very crest of the popular wave, but who are yet destined to sink in the very trough of the sea, to a depth so unfathomable that a bubble will never rise to mark the spot where they went so ignominiously down! Well may those who have inaugurated the revolution which is now stalking over the land cry out, with uplifted hands, for peace, and deprecate the effusion of blood. It was the inventor of the guillotine who was its first unresisting victim; and the day may not be far off before we may find those among our own people who will be compelled to rely upon the magnanimity of the very population they have outraged and deceived. The authors of revolutions have often been their victims.

Sir, at this hour, I have no heart to enter into the details of this argument, or to express the indignant emotions which rise to my lips and plead for utterance. Before God, and in my inmost conscience, I believe that slavery will be crucified, if this unhappy controversy ends in a dismemberment of the Union. Sir, if not crucified, it will carry the death rattle in its throat. I may be a timid man; I may not know what it is to take up arms in my own defense. It remains to be seen, however, whether treason can be carried out with the same facility it can be plotted and arranged. There is a holy courage among the minority in every slave State, that may be for the time overwhelmed. Lazarus is not dead, but sleepeth. Ere long, the stone will be rolled away from the mouth of the tomb, and we shall have all the glories of a new resurrection.

Sir, who has forgotten that, among the clans of Scotland, beacon fires could be lit, by concerted signals, leaping, for a time, from mountain crag to mountain crag, in living volumes of flame, yet expiring even in its own fierceness and sinking into ashes, as the faggots were consumed? This may be likened to a rebellion, such as political leaders may sometimes prompt for a brief hour; but the fires burn with the faggots, and all is cold

and dark again. There is as much contrast between such a movement and a real uprising among the masses for their violated rights, as there is between Bottom the weaver and Snug the joiner, who can "roar you as gently as any sucking dove;" and "coo you an 'twere any nightingale." One is the stage trick of a political harlequin; the other a living reality. The one is a fitful and lurid flame; the other, a prairie on fire, finding, in every step of its progress, food for its all-ravenging maw.

Sir, in this exigency, before this political conspiracy, I may stand alone with my colleague from the Norfolk district, [Mr. MILLSON,] who has more political sagacity than generally falls to the lot of mortal men. Let it be even so. I seek no office. My political race is voluntarily run. History will record the proceedings of this turbulent period; and time, the gentle but infallible arbiter of all things earthly, will decide the truth. Cruel words may be borne, in the idea that the day is not far distant when there will be charitable speeches, and cool, second thoughts, and the revulsion, which always follows the whipped syllabus of passion. *Here I take my stand!*

Sir, we live in an age of political paradoxes. Broad, expansive love of country, has become a diseased sentimentality. Patriotism has been transformed into a starveling birdling, clinging with unfledged wings around the nest of twigs where it was born. A statesman *now* must not only

"Narrow his mind,

And to party give up what was meant for mankind,"

but he must become as submissive as a blind horse in a bark mill, to every perverted opinion, which sits, whip in hand, on the revolving shaft, at the end of which he is harnessed, and meekly travels. To be considered a diamond of the first water, he must stand in the Senate house of his country, and in the very face of a forbearing people, glory in being a traitor and a rebel. He must solemnly proclaim the death of the nation to which he has sworn allegiance, and, with the grim stolidity of an undertaker, invite its citizens to their own funeral. He must dwarf and provincialize his patriotism to the State on whose local passions he thrives, to the county where he practices court, or to the city where he flaunts in all the meretricious dignity of a Doge of Venice. He can take an oath to support the Constitution of the United States, but he can enter with honor into a conspiracy to overthrow it. He can, under the sanctity of the same oath, advise the seizure of forts and arsenals and dock-yards and ships and money belonging to the Union, whose officer he is, and find a most loyal and convenient retreat in State authority and State allegiance. He is ready to laugh in your face when you tell him that, before he was "muling and puking in his nurse's arms," there lived a very obscure person by the name of George Washington, and who, before he died, became eminent, by perpetrating the immortal joke of advising the people of the United States that "it is of infinite moment that we should properly estimate the immense value of our national Union; that we should cherish a cordial, habitual, and immovable attachment to it; that we should watch for its preservation with jealous

anxiety; discountenancing whatever may suggest a suspicion that it can in any event be abandoned; and indignantly frown upon the first dawning of every attempt to alienate any portion of our country from the rest, or to enfeeble the sacred ties which now link together the various parts."

Sir, that great man penetrated, as with the acumen of a seer, into the crowning bane of this disastrous period, when he warned his countrymen against the consequences of geographical parties. Extremes in the North and extremes in the South have at last met. Parties have been organized and carried on by systematic perversions of each other's aims and objects. In the North it has been represented that the South desired and intended to monopolize with slave labor all the public territory; to drive out free labor; to convert every free State into common ground for the recapture of colored persons as slaves who were free; and to put the Federal Government, in all its departments, under the control of a slave oligarchy. These and all other stratagems that could be resorted to to arouse antagonistic feelings were wielded with turbulent and tumultuous passion. As we planted, so we reap. Now, that victory has been obtained by the Republican party, and the Government must be administered upon national policy and principles, the fissures in the ground hitherto occupied become apparent; and hence there must necessarily be a large defection in its ranks among the more ultra of its adherents, who are, as a general thing, ideal, speculative, and not practical men.

Out of power, a party is apt to be radical; vested with power, and it becomes conservative. This is the ordeal through which the Republican, like all other parties, is now passing; and it is to be hoped, for the peace of the country, it will result in the triumph of practical and national, rather than ideal policy and sectional measures. Herein consists the almost insuperable difficulty of coming to any feasible adjustment upon the existing discontents. The bulk of politicians, North and South, are bound by a past record and past professions. They are thinking all the while of what Mrs. Grundy will say. The people understand the cause of the difficulty, and are moving. If they could interpose, the country might yet be saved.

Sir, what is that difficulty now; what has it always been? I appeal to every unprejudiced man's experience to say, whether it has not been that, in the hands of ultraists North and ultraists South, the slaveholder has been used as a shuttledore, and, for purposes utterly dissimilar, has been banded from South Carolina to Massachusetts, and from Massachusetts to South Carolina, until now the last point of endurance has been reached. Every virulent word uttered North has been sent South, and the South has responded in the same virulent spirit. Nay, the Abolitionist himself has been granted an audience in every southern city, at every southern political meeting, and the most violent, insulting, agrarian speeches repeated in the hearing even of slaves themselves. Is it not a humiliation to confess, that the very people who would burn in effigy, if not at the stake, a postmaster who would dare to distribute

a copy of ultra abolition speeches, honor as among their chief defenders, the candidates who can quote the most obnoxious passages from all? Who has made of southern politics, a vast hotbed, for the propagation of abolition sentiments, but ultra southern men themselves? Who has indoctrinated the northern people with dissimilar sentiments, expressed by the most ultra southern men, but northern zealots themselves?

The population of the two great sections of this nation stand, therefore, towards each other, at this moment, like encamped armies, waiting for the command to battle. The patriot plans, deplures, appeals, deplures and plans and appeals again, finding but little succor in the only quarter whence succor can come. The Abolitionist revels in the madness of the hour. He sees the crack in the iceberg at last. For him the desert and the battle field are both alike welcome. He kneels down in the desert with the camels, for a speck in the far distant horizon shows the simoon is coming. He looks into the future as into a dark cloud in the morning, when nothing sings but the early lark. Soon history, like the light of that eastern horizon, will curtain back that cloud, and paint in blood's ruddiest tints, field and forest, hamlet and city, the very mountains, to their pine crowned tops, and the great ocean itself, as an ensanguined flood, where brother contending with brother, shall find a nameless sepulcher!

No anaconda, with his filthy folds around the banyan tree, ever threw out the venomous tongue, and yearned with fiercer passion for the crushed bone and the pulpy flesh, than he now expectant of his prey, yearns for the long postponed rapist. Well may he cry that the day of jubilee has come. Well may he marshal his hosts to the last great war of sections and of races. Defeated, stigmatized, insulted, scoffed at, ostracized, gibbeted by his countrymen, he now gloats over the most fearful of all retributions. His deadliest foes hitherto in the South, have now struck hands in a solemn league of kindred designs, and with exultant tramp, stolidly march, adorned like a Roman ox, with the garlands of sacrifice, to their eternal doom.

Sir, is it necessary to proclaim what *that* is? At this moment, when a sudden frenzy has struck blind the southern people, it cannot even be realized; and I may be scoffed and hooted at with that perversity in ill which masses of men sometimes display who are intent on their own inevitable destruction. Sir, when I look at my country, its present desolate condition, and its possible fate, I am almost ready to close the quick accents of speech, and allow the heart to sink down voiceless in its despair! Listen to the words of William Lloyd Garrison, and tell me what answer you will give to them:

"At last the covenant with death is annulled and the agreement with hell broken, by the action of South Carolina herself, and ere long by all the slaveholding States, for their doom is one. Hail the approaching jubilee, ye millions who are wearing the galling chains of slavery, for assuredly the day of your redemption draws nigh, bringing liberty to you and salvation to the whole land."

Hear him again:

"Justice and liberty, God and man, demand the dissolution of this slaveholding Union, and the formation of a

northern confederacy, in which slaveholders will stand before the law as felons, and be treated as pirates."

Hear him again, in a voice so familiar that it sounds like one which ere-while rung out from the portico of the Mills House, in Charleston:

"In all this, what State so prepared to lead as the old Bay State? She has already made it a penal offense to help to execute a law of the Union. I want to see the officers of the State brought in collision with those of the Union. Up, then! up with the flag of disunion! that we may have a free and glorious Union of our own! How stands Massachusetts at this hour in reference to the Union? Just where she ought to be, in an attitude of open hostility."

Sir, there is an old maxim that it is lawful and wise to learn from our enemies. There is another man in the North—Wendell Phillips—of great pertinacity of purpose, of a heart like a vase filled with fire, of vast powers of illustration and declamation; and to whom the passions of the multitude are as clay in the hands of a cunning molder. The senior Senator from New York [Mr. SEWARD] has an intellect of high culture, and his speeches are philosophical essays, modeled after the idealism and style of Burke; but his voice is harsh and guttural, and his spirit cold and impassive. Phillips is the man for the multitude. Seward for the closet. Since this session commenced he has had an opportunity to make himself immortal. Intrepidity of soul in a statesman carries with it the victories of peace, which the military chieftain gains in war. The panoply of political martyrdom, in this age, might have been a species of deification in the next. The accepted moment has passed; and I am fearful it will come to him never, never more. The dissolution of the Union dethrones the Republican party, disrobes it of power, and makes Garrison and Phillips, and their confederates, the absolute dictators of the North.

And what says Phillips:

"We are disunionists, not from any love of separate confederacies, or as ignorant of the thousand evils that spring from neighboring and quarrelsome States; but we would get rid of this Union, to get rid of slavery."

Hear him again. He used the following language:

"All hail, disunion! Sacrifice everything for the Union? God forbid! Sacrifice everything to keep South Carolina in it? Rather build a bridge of gold, and pay her toll over it. Let her march off with banners and trumpets, and we will speed the parting guest. Let her not stand upon the order of her going, but go at once. Give her the forts and arsenals and sub-treasures, and lend her jewels of silver and gold, and Egypt will rejoice that she has departed."

We have, then, before us, these knights of a new crusade. The Constitution of the United States is the sanctified Jerusalem, against which their deluded cohorts are arrayed. They contend the only mode to overthrow slavery is to overthrow the Constitution. They refuse to take office under it, because it recognizes slavery. They will not take an oath to support it, because it protects slavery. They claim their allegiance is due to the State, and to the State alone. They are State-rights men of the straightest sect; and they wield the legislative power of the State for the extinction of slavery, as South Carolina professes to wield her's for the perpetuation of slavery.

Sir, is there not left among us statesmanship sufficient to control these issues, and apply the corrective in time, and save this great country, now convulsed from its center to its circumference? Standing in the midst of these troubles, and looking into the future with the most inexpressible apprehensions, I acknowledge, with pleasure, one patriotic move in the right direction. It is one of the cheering signs of this most disastrous time, when "an airy devil's in the sky, and rains down mischiefs," that the descendant of two former Presidents, who bears an ancestral fame now greater than any man in America, should step forward with an offering of peace to an afflicted people. Sir, grant it was nothing more than a covenant declaratory of the spirit of the Constitution. It was meet that Massachusetts, so largely partaking of our common glory in the past; Massachusetts, where the first blood for American liberty was shed—should rise superior to the convulsions of the hour, and give an earnest, at least, that the spirit of conciliation, of inter-State comity, of fraternal affection, was not yet wholly lost. As the worn traveler in the midst of the snows of the Alps lingers, with delighted gaze, upon the friendly light which peers from the windows of the distant convent, where, from the desolation of the storm around him, he may at last find repose, so do I hail that little gleam of hope in the midst of all the darkness of this hour.

Sir, I speak not as a suppliant. I ask not for bounty. I will not accept quarter. I demand only that justice which springs at the bidding of an honest magnanimity! North Carolina, which, first of all, proclaimed our independence; and Virginia, which, first of all, gave birth to it, both allied to Massachusetts by the renown of a great past which no civil convulsion can ever destroy or impair, yet linger within the bounds of the Union in hopes to save a country whose glory belongs to us all. Will you step forward and meet them, with grasped hands, in the spirit which made your fathers illustrious; or will you steel yourself against every noble impulse, and shut out every access to sympathy and affection? Let the errors of the past be forgotten. If the disasters of the hour have sprung from the seeds you planted, let the act be forgiven. Fruitful examples in your history cluster all around us. Let us ex-hume the records of the past, and hear the sentiments of another distinguished son, and see whether we cannot gather from him some wisdom to guide our counsels.

In March, 1798, when the bill for the erection of a government in the Mississippi Territory was before Congress, it was moved that the same should be, in all respects, similar to that established in the Northwestern Territory, except that "*slavery should not be forbidden.*" Mr. Thatcher, of Massachusetts, moved to strike out the excepting clause, thus excluding slavery in that Territory.

Mr. Otis, of Massachusetts, "hoped his colleague would not withdraw his motion; and the reason why he wished this was, that an opportunity might be given to gentlemen who came from the same part of the Union with him, to mani-

fest that it is not their disposition to interfere with the southern States as to the species of property in question. He thought it was not the business of those who had nothing to do with that kind of property, to interfere with that right. If the amendment prevailed, it would declare that no slavery should exist in the Natchez country. This would not only be a sentence of banishment, but of war. By permitting slavery in this district of country, the number of slaves would not be increased, as if emigrants from South Carolina or Georgia were to remove into this country, they would bring their slaves with them; and he could see nothing in this which could affect the philanthropy of his friend."

Sir, if a descendant of Mr. Otis lives, let him be still prouder of the memory of his father; for the inauguration of the policy upon which he acted, in this high place, would at this time, give peace to thirty millions of people. Is the spirit of the olden time all vanished? Is patriotism to be ex-humed from the cooled lava of another Pompei and Herculaneum?

What divides the North and South at this moment? Is it the personal liberty bills? No, sir! Not so much them. Is it the fugitive slave law? No, sir; not so much that. The great superinducing cause of all difficulty has been that very territorial question which was settled so quietly by the policy of Mr. Otis in 1798, and is now settled on the same principle by the Supreme court.

In the superb argument made by my colleague from the Norfolk district on yesterday, (in my estimation the best effort of his life,) he declared that, upon this question, the South had gained the principle, but the North had the benefit of its practical operation; that the North had the substance, but the South the shadow. That both were victors, and yet both were vanquished. Sir, it is even so. In 1790, the price of a male field hand twenty-four years of age, as shown by the recorded appraisement of an estate in the county where I live, was \$250. At that period, the labor of a slave was cheaper than that of a freeman; but the invention of Whitney's cotton-gin, opening the virgin soil of the tropics to a more profitable investment than had ever been hitherto known, rapidly increased the value of slaves, during a period of thirty years, to an incredible per centage. Slavery became allied with capital, and, as the remunerative prices for cotton increased, was placed more and more beyond the reach of men of small means. In 1850, in the slave States, with a population of 6,000,000, the number of slaveholders was 347,555, heads of families, representing 1,500,000 people, and the number of slaves was over 3,000,000. Of this number, 68,820 had but one slave each, 105,683 had under five slaves each, 174,503 slave owners held but 385,869 slaves, while 173,022 held the whole balance, amounting to 2,818,444. In Virginia, in 1830, the white population amounted to 694,302; slaves to 469,755. In 1840, the whites were 740,968; slaves, 448,988. In 1850, the whites were 894,800; slaves, 472,528. In 1859, according to the report of the auditor, the whites amounted to 915,204; the slaves taxed were 272,073; and the slaves

exempt from taxation, as under twelve years of age, were 260,507; leaving the whole number 532,580. Here, in a period of thirty years, every man can see for himself what increase was made in slavery and white population in Virginia. In a cycle of sixty years, the increase of the slaves in the border States has been only 64 per cent., and the increase in the other southern States, including Texas, has been 700 per cent. In 1850, the number of white persons born south, who had voluntarily emigrated to the free States, amounted to 726,450; and it is most remarkable that the greatest number came from the border slave States. The number from Virginia was 184,000; from Kentucky, 150,000; from North Carolina, 64,000; from Missouri, 20,000; from Maryland, 72,000; from Delaware, 7,000; and from Tennessee, 50,000. By the census of 1860, there are estimated to be about 4,000,000 slaves and about 7,500,000 whites who have no slaves. By the same census, the northwestern tier of free States, (Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and Minnesota,) gain by Representatives 14 members of Congress. The New England States lose 4; the middle free States lose 5; the central slave States lose 6, and the coast-planting States lose 2. The whites in the free States are estimated at 19,000,000, and in the slave States at 9,000,000.

I have grouped together these facts for the purpose of showing there is an irreversible law of population governing this question; and that it has been population the South wanted, rather than territory. They want population and capital; and if the proceedings of these days are allowed to be as inauspicious as they seem to be, I will show you a southern confederacy (created out of this Union) from which every man will turn back affrighted and pale, because it will be on the bloody and reeking hand that his rights of property must depend. The deductions which might be drawn are diversified and various; but I have not now the time to amplify them. This fact, at least, is apparent to the plainest comprehension, that slavery cannot *rapidly* expand, *either in the Union or out of it*, as long as slaves remain at the present high prices. I defy any man here—I care not who he is—to meet me in the fair argument of this question, and not be tied down by that scythe [pointing to the clock] which revolves and cuts down the grassy moments as they spring. The only mode by which slavery can ever expand is to reduce the price, and have a new source of supply. Now, mark you, in nearly all the southern States, except South Carolina, *free white suffrage prevails*, and the slaveholders hold their property under constitutional restrictions, it is true, but, at the same time, at the sufferance of seven millions, who have no slaves. We can begin to understand, *now*, why it is that, within late years, we have heard so much in regard to the reopening of the African slave trade. The class who hold the votes and exercise sovereign political power are beginning to make themselves felt. They can see no difference between buying a slave in Africa and in Virginia; and it is especially desirable to get a naked, chattering barbarian, from the barracoons of Congo for \$100, and lick him into shape, through the benign process

of Christian civilization, rather than pay \$1,600 for one already civilized, in a domestic market. From 1856 up to this day, in every southern commercial convention—at Savannah, in Georgia; at Montgomery, in Alabama; at Vicksburg, in Mississippi—the question has been agitated, and that, too, by many of the very men who, as politicians, have been most prominent in the existing revolution.

A member of this House from Illinois, on the 28th of December, 1859, put certain questions to certain gentlemen on this floor, and I desire to recur now to their answers; and, so far as Virginia and the border slave States are concerned, it may not be without benefit in the present exigency. The answers were, substantially, as follows. Every gentleman can see for himself the whole of them, by consulting the Congressional Globe:

Mr. Miles, of South Carolina. "I am not prepared to say that I may not, *at some future time*, be in favor of reopening the African slave trade. There is no sensible man, north or south, who believes we can in the *present Union* reopen the African slave trade *legally*."

Mr. Bonham, of South Carolina. "As to whether I would be in favor of reopening the African slave trade, *in the event that this Confederacy should be dissolved*, I am not prepared to say."

Mr. McRae, of Mississippi. "I am in favor of enforcing the laws as they now stand; but I consider them unconstitutional and bad laws; laws which are oppressive to the South; laws *which take away from the southern States their equality in this Union*, in reference to their labor system, so far as its supply is concerned."

They go out of the Union because she will not give them equality, and they go into the other Union to get equality. Suppose they do not get it, what becomes of them? That is a little problem in the rule of three which will be ciphered out, if these events are much longer pending.

Mr. Crawford, of Georgia, said: "Under a *particular state of circumstances*, I would be in favor of reopening the African slave trade."

Now, sir, if one so humble as myself may venture an opinion upon these and kindred matters I must be allowed to say that the border slave States may as well be prepared first as last for the realization of the truth, that the coast States are aiming not so much at expansion *within* as expansion *without* the Union. Visions of conquest, visions of military glory, float before the southern enthusiast, in the glowing speeches of a Peter the Hermit of a new crusade, whose declared policy it was "to inflame the southern mind, fire the southern heart, and precipitate the cotton States into a revolution."

But where is slavery to expand? The South goes out of the Union, and it will never touch as much earth of the territory that now belongs to it as I can grasp thus. Never! Never! A war of thirty years will never get it back. If you fight, you will never extort by a treaty from the North the same guarantees that you now have in this Constitution emblazoned on those shields above us—the very type of national strength and national unity.

Where is slavery to expand? Will it be to Central America? There England exercises sovereignty over more than half of her domain, comprehending nearly the whole coast from Yucatan to New Granada. A debt of \$70,000,000 is due from that country to British creditors, and British war vessels are at good anchorage to see that custom-house duties are punctually paid for their benefit. Who has forgotten the interposition of Commander Salmon against the designs of General Walker, and his death mainly through that cause alone. In all that country slavery is abolished by treaties with England. Have we forgotten that the Earl of Aberdeen admitted that the utmost influence of the Government was to be exerted to procure the abolishment of slavery in Texas; and both he and Mr. Packenham admitted that this was with the ultimate view of a similar result in the United States? At this very hour a commissioner is said to be in England to negotiate for southern independence, and to enter into an offensive and defensive treaty, based upon mutuality of interests. The South cannot descend to take the manufactures of New England, but she will gladly take those of Old England. No matter that she does give secure refuge in Canada to every fugitive slave; no matter that she did give in her dominions a safe place for Brown and his confederates to hatch their treasonable conspiracy, and furnished Forbes, an English subject, to drill them; no matter if she did set the example of emancipation at an expense of hundreds of millions as indemnity, and hundreds of millions more in losses of agricultural products, in the West Indies; no matter that she did procure the abolishment of slavery in Mexico, and has now a sum of \$200,000,000 due her subjects, with a British vessel in the offing at Vera Cruz to see that the interest is duly paid; no matter if she devastates Hindostan with the tornado of her limitless rapacity, makes Ireland a pauper house, and exiles four millions of her people from their native soil; no matter if she did expel the negroes of New Zealand from their lowly huts, and drive them to wholesale slaughter. No, she may do all this; she may, in cold blood, cut the throats and smother to death in their caverns the Caffirs of Good Hope; she may search out every square foot of soil upon God's habitable globe to raise cotton in competition with that of the South; she may send Livingston into the furthest recesses, the *ultima Thule* of Africa, where a buffalo, if stung by an insect, will die, to find some new soil in the secluded valleys of the interior, where the Manchester spinner can plant and grow the staple for his own spindle. Sir, *this* is the beneficent country, and *this* is the beneficent policy, the South is called to rely upon, through alliances offensive and defensive, and all the inter-complications of interest involved in a commercial treaty, after having, with more than judicial blindness, cut themselves off from their brothers on this continent; brothers in lineage; brothers in allegiance; and, in the midst of all perils, brothers in affection still!

Mr. Speaker, there is a chapter in the past which our retiring confederates may do well to remember. In 1834, an English Abolitionist, by the name of George Thompson, was sent from Exe-

ter Hall, in England, to enlighten the dead conscience of the American people. About that period John A. Murrill, of Madison county, Tennessee, had, by means of a secret band, bound with signs and oaths, arranged for a general rising of the negroes on the 25th of December, 1835. Among other papers found, was the following epistle of love from the English emissary, dated March 18, 1834. It was addressed to Murrill:

"DEAR SIR: Your favor of the 4th has come to hand, and its contents have been carefully observed. I think you can count upon the aid you demand with tolerable certainty by the time you name. I approve of your arrangements, and can perceive abundant justification of your views. Could the blacks effect a general concert of action, and let loose the arm of destruction among their masters, and their property, so that the judgment of God might be visibly seen and felt, it would reach the flinty heart. We must reach the tyrant in another way. His interests must be affected before he will repent. We can prepare the feelings of most of the northern and eastern people by lecturing. The dissolution of the Union is the object to be kept steadily in view. War will result, and sacking and pillage and insurrection will follow. Their cities, with all the merchandise, may be destroyed, their banks plundered of specie, their paper discredited, so that thousands of eastern capitalists would suffer great loss, and would henceforth consider a slave country an unsafe place to make investments. This state of affairs would naturally diminish the value of slave property, and disgust even the tyrant with the policy of slavery, while the whole country would be thus in a state of anarchy and poverty. Their banking institutions and credit sunk into disrepute, it would be an easy matter to effect the total abolition of slavery. Desperate diseases require desperate remedies."

Mr. Speaker, was this prophecy, and is it about to become a part of the history of this country?

Mr. AVERY. If the gentleman means John A. Murrill, as I suppose he does, I will say that he quotes from the correspondence of a convict, who served out ten years in the penitentiary of Tennessee for stealing negroes.

Mr. CLEMENS. Very well; the gentleman from Tennessee does not seem to understand that a man who would incite a negro insurrection would be very likely to steal negroes.

I dismiss this unwelcome theme. Let me pass to another. It is evident that, in the event of the formation of a southern confederacy, there will be, besides the African slave trade, another element of discord and agitation, in which the Gulf and border States will have interests entirely dissimilar. Slavery is the great ruling interest of the extreme Gulf States; the other States have great interests besides slavery, which cannot be lightly abandoned. I admit it is to the advantage of the coast States to have a direct exchange of staple commodities for the manufactured articles of England and France. That this is proposed to be realized, we have the fullest proofs. Charleston, Savannah, Mobile, and New Orleans will become great marts of trade. Export duties and direct taxation will be to them a prosperous policy; but how will it operate upon the mechanical and manufacturing and mining industry and capital of Missouri, of Kentucky, of Virginia, of North Carolina, of Maryland, and Delaware, if they should form part of the confederation? I know it is asserted that a mutuality of purposes and a community of interest in slavery will avoid this result. How is it to be avoided? Sir, when it involves a contradiction of the avowed designs of South Carolina for the

last thirty years, and is in perfect correspondence with the declared plans of the people of the cotton States themselves, how, I say, will you avoid it?

An examination of the census of 1860 will disclose the astounding fact that if the Constitution of the United States is taken as a provisional form of government under this new convention which they have called to meet in Montgomery, Alabama, the cotton States, with those abutting upon them, will have, under the fixed ratio of representation, the legislative power over the border slave States, and they will be bound by a policy which may be, as to their great material and mechanical interests, as oppressive as it will be ruinous. If these causes should exist, we shall have an antagonism in that union quite as great; fiftyfold intensified, it may be, beyond anything we have ever had in *this*. But if the other view is taken, and the border States are encouraged and protected in manufactures, the white population of those States will be so vastly increased that they will be but nominal slave States, finally becoming free States by the very necessities of their existence under that inexorable law of population to which I have referred. What principle in free-trade, or any other principle for which they are now contending, will the cotton States have gained by this most disastrous revolution? What time it may take to effect these results, no human sagacity can foretell; but that they will follow, if any reliance at all can be placed upon past experience, is at least my own fixed and solemn conviction. With a tier of free States along the whole northern border of Texas, the western borders of Louisiana and Arkansas, the northern and western portions of Missouri, of Kentucky, of Virginia, and of Maryland, a distance of nearly four thousand miles, this inevitable law of population, operating from its geographical center in the Northwest, and with the facilities for settlement which a Pacific railroad will give, a branch of which the South voluntarily and most fallaciously relinquishes, the great hog-eating Teutons of these vast plains will bear down even upon Texas and Mexico, and ultimately bear them away from any confederacy into which they may enter. In the Union there is at least a fair prospect that Mexico, by the very necessities of our position, will fall into our hands, and in the providence of God it may yet be that this now distracted land, cursed with civil feuds, and racked with internecine wars, may yet be reserved for the purpose of working out the great problem under which the brain of this vast nation is now overwhelmed and reels.

Mr. Speaker, gentlemen from the North shrink back in dismay at the very mention of a proposition to protect slavery south of the line of 36° 30', either as applied to territory now existing, or which may be hereafter acquired, when it is perfectly demonstrable, on the law of population to which we have referred, that every slave State erected within the tropics can only be had at the ultimate sacrifice of a kindred State along the borders of the free States. The policy is the policy of Saturn feeding on the bodies of his own children. It is time the North, as well as the South,

appreciated this state of facts. The field for argument and illustration thus presented is inviting indeed; but within the limits of an hour I can but make suggestions, rather than maintain any extended line of remark. The question for the statesman to decide is: whether the South shall not be guaranteed by constitutional enactments, if need be, in the principle secured to her by that instrument itself, by the decision of the Supreme Court; a principle which may not only be barren of any practical advantage to her, but, if rendered effective, can only be so on the basis of a compensating benefit to the free States themselves, of opening up new fields in a temperate and genial climate for the increase of white population.

I would fain hope, in the determination of this vast question, we may rise above the silly prejudices and splendid shams of the hour. *Let us have no more cant. Let our eyes not blink under the truth as it is.* Let us enlighten, as best we may, the people of this great country, not only as to their duties in the present, but as to their destiny to come. Let us feel we have a country to save, instead of a geographical section to represent. Let us act as men, and not as partisans; and the old Constitution, now in the very trough of the sea, with battered masts and sails in shreds, rolling at the mercy of every breaker, will again, with her dark and weather-beaten sides, loom from the deep; will again skim over the waves like the sea-bird, that scarce wets his bosom on their snowy crests, ringing with glad shouts, and the rapture of anticipated triumph, as when she ranged, like a mighty monster of the deep, beneath the castles of Tripoli, striking them dumb as she passed, or, as when she spread her broad and glorious banner to the winds, and rushed, like a strong man rejoicing to run a race, on the Guerriere and the Java.

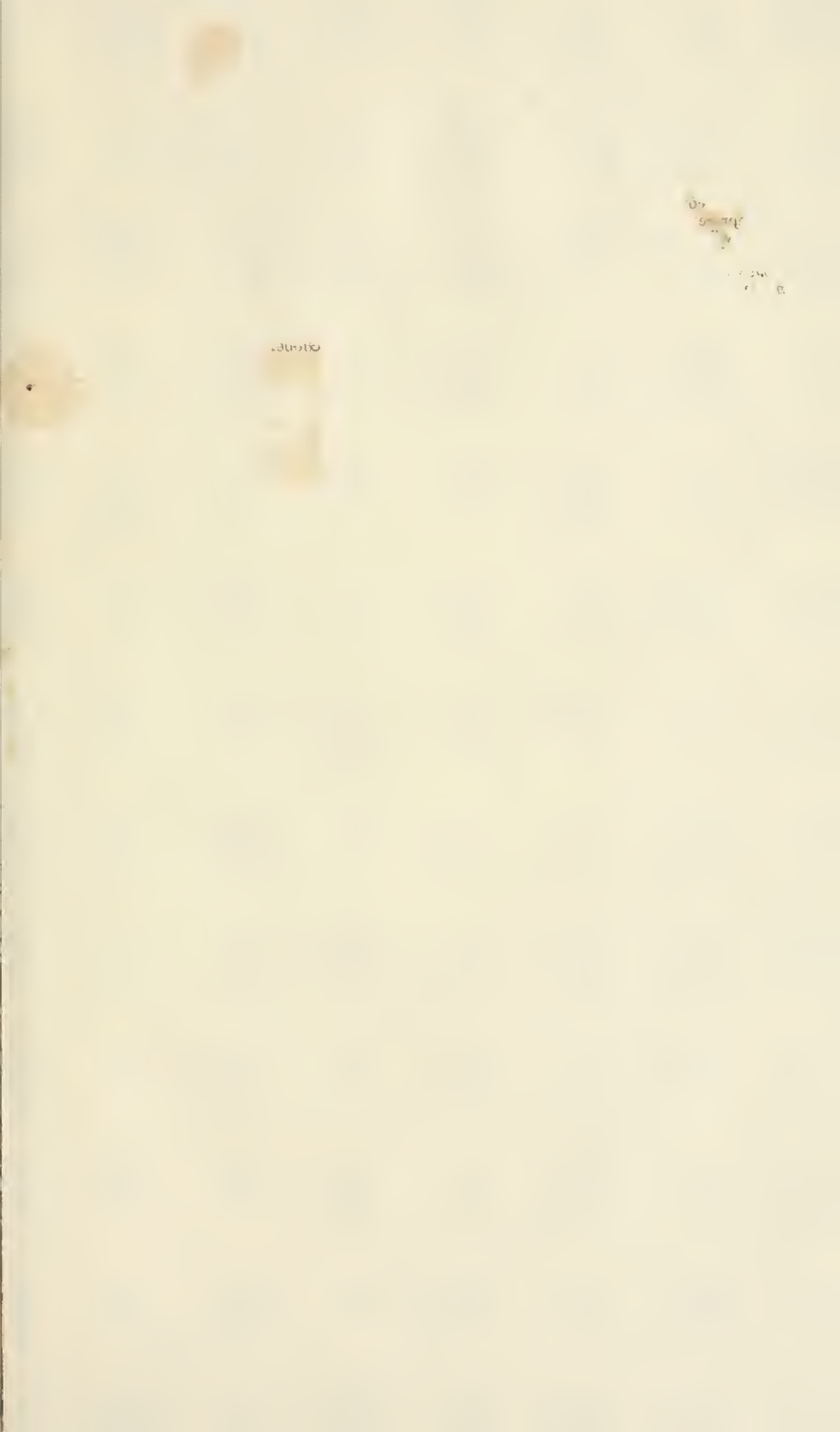
Mr. Speaker, I have necessarily left much unsaid. My last hope upon this most distracting question is upon the action of Virginia. Heed her voice while yet you may! I would now conclude all I have to say in the solemn warning of one of her noblest sons, the author of the Declaration of Independence himself, who, in 1798, in a period not unlike the present, appealed to erring sisters to cling to the sanctuary of their fathers.

"In every free and deliberative society," says he, "there must, from the nature of man, be opposite parties and violent discussions and discords; and one of these, for the most part, must prevail over the other for a longer or shorter time. Perhaps this party division is necessary to induce each to watch and delate to the people the proceedings of the other. But if, on a temporary superiority of the one party, the other is to resort to a scission of the Union, no Federal Government can ever exist. If, to rid ourselves of the present rule of Massachusetts and Connecticut, we break up the Union, will the evil stop there? Suppose the New England States be alone cut off: will our natures be changed? Are we not men still, with all the passions of men? Immediately we shall see a Pennsylvania and Virginia party arise in the residuary confederacy, and the public mind will be distracted with the same party spirit. *What*

game, too, will one party have in their hands by eternally threatening each other, that unless they do so, they will join their northern neighbors? If we reduce our Union to Virginia and North Carolina, immediately the conflict will be established between the representatives of these two States; and even they will end by breaking into their simple units. Seeing, therefore, that an association of men, who will not quarrel with one another, is a thing that never yet existed, from the greatest

Confederacy of nations down to a town meeting or vestry; seeing that we must have somebody to quarrel with, I had rather keep our New England associates for that purpose than to see our bickerings transferred to others." A little patience, mark you, Mr. Speaker—"a little patience, and WE SHALL SEE THE REIGN OF WITCHES PASS OVER, THEIR SPELLS DISSOLVED, AND THE PEOPLE RECOVERING THEIR TRUE SIGHT, RESTORING THEIR GOVERNMENT TO ITS TRUE PRINCIPLES."

Printed at the office of the Congressional Clerk.







WERT
BOOKBINDING
Crannville, Pa.
March-April 1968
WERT BOOKBINDING

